

Mail Blog

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The greeter said they saw me in the other gardens before. It must be someone else who shares my features and interests. I'm just visiting.

They told me not to touch the plants, like they knew I did nothing but touch the plants last time.

I feel a calm, eternal restfulness every time I walk into this glass house.

I found the bench I sat on last time, and as I suspected then, a stranger took my place.

There is a line of marching ants along the wall, carrying out some important duty of collecting, and telling each other about what they're collectively collecting.

As the stranger left the old bench, they made eye contact with me as I looked up from my notebook to have a thought from another person. I am here as part of the exhibit again, but back on the original bench thinking about the ferns around me as they think about the things around them.

From another trip to the conservatory of flowers in San Francisco, a third installment for the de plants feel time series to follow.

"they do, after all, give birth, develop from infancy through puberty to maturity show signs of aging, and eventually perish"

"in this development they are constantly moving, and these movements may show considerable determination"

"for an organism to move in itself suggests some kind of basic feeling"

"animals feel heat and cold wind and rain, fatigue and pain, and various degrees of trust, affection, and sexual pleasure"

"human beings add to these all kinds of emotional and intellectual perceptions and one might add confusions"

"in such terms, plants do not feel; but if we apply one of the main definitions of the word--'to perceive or be aware of through physical sensation' (Webster)--they must certainly do"

On my first visit, when I touched all the plants, I wanted to be buried here and to know what the plant was feeling. I still want that. We are affected by the same atmospheric conditions. When I'm thirsty, the fern is thirsty. And if we don't drink, we die.

I brought the book from which I borrowed the original question: do plants feel? I don't remember what the chapter said about plant feelings. I'm reading it from the exact place I first had the question. I only wanted easy answers then and my curiosity only touched the answer while my hands touched the plant's.

The author of the book, Plant and Planet, is the botanist Anthony Huxley. Aldous's nephew and son of May Sarton's former lover. In the chapter on whether or not plants have feelings, he declares very decidedly and early on that "they must certainly do"

A stranger sat down and watched me without turning a way for minutes.

When possible, it is good to read about something surrounded by that something, otherwise the imagination will go wild with its

a misleading inventions, unless that's what you're after.

"they appreciate being watered. They worry when a dog comes near. They faint when violence threatens their own well-being. And they sympathize when harm comes to animals and insects close to them"

"if their conversation turned to sex or ghosts the plants had ... wild reactions"

"a nervous system in advanced, mobile animals confers sound survival value, while no such value would seem to be involved with plants"

"their need for some kinds of feelings has arisen in entirely different circumstances, and to develop pain-feelings seems to be against their whole life-style, where they can so easily be damaged by external activities ranging from storm and lightning to the biting of caterpillars and the grazing of herbivorous animals, against which they can take no evasive action."

"where man can say 'I think therefore I am,' a plant will suffice on 'I grow, and thus I am'"